

In 1970, an ad was published in *The New York Times* to publicize the first Earth Day. It stated, "Earth Day is a commitment to make life better, not just bigger and faster; to provide real rather than rhetorical solutions. It is a day to re-examine the ethic of individual progress at mankind's expense. It is a day to challenge the corporate and government leaders who promise change, but who shortchange the necessary programs. It is a day for looking beyond tomorrow. April 22 seeks a future worth living." This statement still resonates today.

Over the past few weeks, volunteers, residents, community groups and environmental organizations have spread throughout our state to affect change to the state of our environment. Hard-working, concerned volunteers have demonstrated their dedication to improving our community by volunteering to clean up neighborhoods, remove trash from our waterways and provide solutions to the challenges we face to protect our environment.

This Wednesday, April 22, we celebrate Earth Day, which provides another opportunity to commit to the preservation of our environment. This day highlights the efforts of individuals throughout our region who will work to make our waterways cleaner and our open spaces more vast. But, it isn't enough to rely on individual responsibility; our nation must commit both locally and nationally to fight to make the environment a priority and reverse centuries of abuse.

That is why President Obama and this Congress are so deeply committed to enacting bold clean energy legislation to curb carbon pollution and make clean, renewable American energy a foundation for our economic recovery. The House passed a budget that embraces that goal, including short- and long-term plans for achieving energy independence to ensure the security of our nation, create jobs, and build a clean energy future.

And in March, Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee Henry Waxman released the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009, the initial draft of major legislation to create millions of new clean energy jobs, save consumers hundreds of billions of dollars in energy costs, enhance America's energy independence, and cut global warming pollution. The Committee is aiming to complete action on this legislation prior to Memorial Day.

To put people back to work today and reduce our dependence on foreign oil tomorrow, we are seeking to double our renewable energy production and renovate public buildings to make them

more energy efficient. The energy provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed into law by President Obama on February 17, will create more than 500,000 jobs, and accelerate deployment of smart grid technology, provide energy efficiency funds for the nation's schools, offer support for the nation's governors and mayors to tackle their energy challenges, and establish a new loan guarantee program to keep our transition to renewable energy on track during the economic crisis.

This action couldn't come any sooner. There is clear evidence that the Earth's surface is warming, causing surface temperatures to increase and sea levels to rise at an alarming rate. According to the United Nations Energy Program, eleven of the last twelve years have been among the warmest in global surface temperature on record since 1850. And scientists at a recent conference in Copenhagen on climate change reported that sea levels are rising "almost twice as rapidly as had been forecast by the United Nations just two years ago."

If we don't act soon to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions polluting our air and water, the health of the environment and our own health will continue to degrade. Indeed, the Environmental Protection Agency declared just last week that greenhouse gases are a danger to human health and welfare, and that there is justified cause for government to help address the threat.

Earth Day's call to action reminds us that, as a community, we can influence the quality of our water and air, the beauty of our local stream or woods, and the richness of our recreational surroundings. And, that environmental protection does not have to come at the expense of economic opportunities and job creation, encouraging new small business entrepreneurship and assuring the future of our long-standing business, farming and service industries. Economic growth does not have to mean environmental destruction.

I am proud to say that the citizens of the Fifth Congressional District are sponsoring many events to commemorate Earth Day. To find out more information on these coming events, you can go to [www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net), or contact the Earth Day organizers at 202-518-0044.